

IN THE CLAIMS:

The text of all pending claims, (including withdrawn claims) is set forth below. Cancelled and not entered claims are indicated with claim number and status only. The claims as listed below show added text with underlining and deleted text with ~~striketrough~~. The status of each claim is indicated with one of (original), (currently amended), (cancelled), (withdrawn), (new), (previously presented), or (not entered).

Please CANCEL claims 1-13 and AMEND claims 16-18 and 20 in accordance with the following:

1-13. (CANCELLED)

14. (ORIGINAL) A server used by its being connected via a network to a plurality of multifunction machines, comprising:

a plurality of request processing means for processing requests received from said plurality of multifunction machines via the network, said request processing means assigning, when receiving the request from said multifunction machine, said multifunction machine having transmitted the request to said request processing means itself;

assigning means for sending to said multifunction machine a completion-of-assignment notification indicating that an operation in linkage via the network becomes possible; and

assignment canceling means for canceling, when the request is not received from said assigned multifunction machine even after a predetermined has elapsed, the assignment of said multifunction machine by said request processing means.

15. (ORIGINAL) A server according to claim 14, wherein said assigning means includes means for sending to said multifunction machine the completion-of-assignment notification containing information on processes executable by said server.

16. (CURRENTLY AMENDED) A server according to claim ~~14 or 15~~, further comprising:

means, for faxing the image data, having a function of faxing, when given a request for a FAX transmission from said multifunction machine assigned by said request processing means, the image data received from said multifunction machine.

17. (CURRENTLY AMENDED) A server according to any one of claims ~~14 to 16~~, further comprising:

means, for recording plural pieces of image data, having a function of recording, when said multifunction requests said request processing means to register the image data, the image data received from said multifunction machine.

18. (CURRENTLY AMENDED) A server according to any one of claims 14~~to 16~~, further comprising:

recording means for recording the utilizing situation information received from said plurality of multifunction machines; and

utilizing situation information transmitting means for transmitting, when any one of nodes makes a request for transmitting the utilizing situation information, the utilizing situation information back to said node having transmitted the transmission request.

19. (ORIGINAL) A server according to any one of claim 18, further comprising:

utilizing situation information periodic transmitting means for transmitting the utilizing situation information in accordance with a predetermined schedule even when there is no transmission request from said node.

20. (CURRENTLY AMENDED) A server according to claims 18~~and 19~~, wherein said utilizing situation information recording means has non-volatile recording means, and further includes:

destruction detecting means for detecting a destruction of the information recorded in said utilizing situation information recording means; and

utilizing situation information managing means for, when detecting the destruction of the information, requesting each of said multifunction machines to transmit the utilizing situation information, and again recording said utilizing situation information recording means with the utilizing situation information of said each multifunction machine which is received as a response to the above request.

21. (ORIGINAL) A program recording medium recorded with a computer capable of communicating with other apparatuses via a network, for making said computer function as a server, said program comprising:

a request processing step of processing requests received from a plurality of multifunction machines via the network, and assigning, when receiving the request from any one of said multifunction machines, said multifunction machine having transmitted the request;

a step of sending to said multifunction machine a completion-of-assignment notification indicating that an operation in linkage via the network becomes possible; and

a step of canceling, when the request is not received from said assigned multifunction machine even after a predetermined has elapsed, the assignment of said multifunction machine in said request processing step.

22-26. (CANCELLED)